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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

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Letter dated 4 August 1994 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/155 of 20 December 1993, I have the honour to transmit the text of a statement made by the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin, on 31 July 1994 regarding the approval by the Saeima (Parliament) of the Latvian Republic of a discriminatory Citizenship Act.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its attachment circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 103 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV

* A/49/150.

ANNEX

Statement of 31 July 1994 by the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin

The attention of the world community has again focused on the situation created in Latvia by the repeated approval by the Saeima of that country of a discriminatory Citizenship Act. The adoption of the Act was a severe test of Latvia's as yet not firmly established statehood and of that country's claimed devotion to European and world-wide humanitarian and democratic values.

It may be concluded from a study of the final text of the Act that the Latvian parliamentarians did not pass that test, were unable to rise above their ambitions and ignored the growing concern of the international community at Latvia's dangerous drift into militaristic nationalism. In fact, they paid no attention to a major part of the recommendations of CSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union. Latvia has not pursued the course of aligning its policy with the high European and international standards in the field of human rights, but has chosen to divide the people living in the country into first-class and second-class inhabitants, and has legitimized discrimination on ethnic grounds. As a result we are witnessing, in Europe on the threshold of the twenty-first century, the transformation of a newly independent State into a hotbed of nationalist intolerance raised to the level of official policy. The consequences this will have for Latvian society and for stability in the Baltic region are not difficult to imagine.

By its actions, Latvia has cancelled out the positive groundwork laid through the strenuous efforts of the parties in the process of settling all aspects of the withdrawal of Russian troops from that country.

The Russian Federation cannot view with equanimity a situation in which, in a neighbouring country, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Russians are placed in an essentially humiliating situation. Our position is that they are entitled to remain in those States where they were born or where they have been living for many years. It is these States that bear the responsibility for ensuring the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of our fellow Russians.

The Russian Federation will shape its policy towards Latvia and plan practical measures on the basis of the situation that has arisen.

The Government of the Russian Federation has been instructed to define practical approaches to cooperation with Latvia, including in the trade and economic sphere.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation has been instructed to draw the attention of international organizations and of our leading partners to this example of blatant disregard for international standards in the field of human rights.

As President of the Russian Federation, I declare that the Russian Federation will fully support our fellow Russians living abroad, and I confirm the readiness of our State to grant Russian citizenship without impediment to those of them who so desire, and also to protect and extend patronage to all ethnic Russians in Latvia and elsewhere outside the Russian Federation.